

Mold FAQ's

What are molds?

Molds are fungi that can be found both indoors and outdoors. No one knows how many species of fungi exist but estimates range from tens of thousands to perhaps three hundred thousand or more. Molds grow best in warm, damp, and humid conditions, and spread and reproduce by making spores.

There are no established safe levels or regulatory standards for mold.

How do molds affect people?

Some people are sensitive to molds. For these people, exposure to molds can lead to symptoms such as stuffy nose, wheezing, and red or itchy eyes, or skin. Some people, such as those with allergies to molds or with asthma, may have more intense reactions.

People with a weakened immune system, such as people receiving treatment for cancer, people who have had an organ or stem cell transplant, and people taking medicines that suppress the immune system, are more likely to get mold infections.

Should I see a doctor concerning mold exposure?

You should first consult a family or general health care provider (if you are experiencing intense symptoms like stuffy nose, wheezing, and red or itchy eyes, or skin) who will decide whether you need referral to a specialist. Such specialists might include an allergist who treats patients with mold allergies or an infectious disease physician who treats mold infections.

How can people decrease mold exposure?

Inside homes, mold growth can be slowed by controlling humidity levels.

Specific Recommendations:

Keep humidity levels as low as you can—no higher than 50%—all day long. An air conditioner or dehumidifier will help you keep the level low. Bear in mind that humidity levels change over the course of a day with changes in the moisture in the air and the air temperature, so you will need to check the humidity levels more than once a day.

- Use an air conditioner or a dehumidifier during humid months.
- Be sure the home has adequate ventilation, including exhaust fans.
- Add mold inhibitors to paints before application.
- Clean bathrooms with mold killing products.
- Do not carpet bathrooms and basements.
- Remove or replace previously soaked carpets and upholstery.

Cleaning Mold

Mold growth can be removed from hard surfaces with commercial products, soap and water, or a bleach solution of no more than 1 cup of household laundry bleach in 1 gallon of water. Follow the manufacturers' instructions for use (see product label).

If you choose to use bleach to clean up mold:

- Never mix bleach with ammonia or other household cleaners. Mixing bleach with ammonia or other cleaning products will produce dangerous, toxic fumes.
- Open windows and doors to provide fresh air.
- Wear rubber boots, rubber gloves, and goggles during cleanup of affected area.
- Always follow the manufacturer's instructions when using bleach or any other cleaning product.
- If the area to be cleaned is *more than 10 square feet*, consult the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) guide titled "Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings". Although focused on schools and commercial buildings, this document also applies to other building types.

You can get it by going to the EPA web site at

<https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2014-08/documents/moldremediation.pdf>.

Should I get my Home Tested for Mold?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) does not recommend mold testing. The health effects of mold can be different for different people so you cannot rely on sampling and culturing to know if you or a member of your family might become sick. No matter what type of mold is present, you need to remove it. Also, good sampling for mold can be expensive, and there are no set standards for what is and what is not an acceptable quantity of different kinds of mold in a home. The best thing you can do is to safely remove the mold and work to prevent future mold growth.

Who can test my home or clean, fix and remediate my home for mold?

The key to mold growth is moisture so part of assessing mold problems is looking for existing or potential moisture problems. Companies that provide water damage inspection services may help look for moisture and some may be familiar with mold problems as well. Ask about qualifications, training and experience and check references for professionals you are considering.

There are no established safe levels or regulatory standards for mold, so, although testing can be done, it may be of limited use in helping to understand the problem. Mold assessment is mainly done through visual inspection of areas where there have been moisture problems or water damage.

Information provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the United States Environmental Protection Agency – June 2018

6/2018